

CHAPTER 244

Round 4

"Christ... This has gotten worse than I ever could have imagined."

Justin hung his head with shame as he walked down the hallway. He just left her there to fight his shadow; what kind of horrible person was he to leave her with a mad man like that? He'd probably rip her to shreds in an instant. And yet he was too afraid to turn around and see the blood river in the road. It hadn't been the first time he had left a friend behind to certain death in hopes they could pull out on their own. He was a coward, even he realized that. But he couldn't change, no matter how hard he tried to. He sighed, hands dragging against the wall besides him as he walked, his heart clenched up in his chest with pain and guilt. He didn't even want to think of what happened when he ran; logically, nothing good could have come from it. But... What was he supposed to do, stay too? Maya should have run with him, but she didn't. That was her fault, right? Justin shouldn't have felt bad for her decision, and yet... He had never felt worse in all his life. This wasn't the first time she had sacrificed herself to save Justin's life; he shouldn't have been putting her through this, and yet he was. He was a complete asshole. At least, that's how he felt.

He kicked open the door that lead to the gymnasium. The room was empty, but god knew he had to be here. It was a big room and the walls around him seemed to lead him straight here. He had no choice in the matter. He never did; he was a sheep in the herd going with the flow of the river that carried him from point to point. Sometimes he hit a couple rocks in the stream, and the pain always lasted as the water poured into his bloody wound. This was one of those days, only instead of rocks, these were sharp shards of glass and metal, litter in the river, trash to go with the garbage in the rushing waters to the river's mouth. His eyes scanned the room, hoping for some form of life, even knowing the implications of encountering someone else in this twisted little game of Teddie's. He had found a way around the language barrier, and right now, he really could use someone that had his back right about now. In a way, he got what he was looking for, and yet, the furthest thing possible from what he desired.

"...Pardon me for interrupting while you are lost in thought." Justin jumped a bit as a voice came from behind him. He was tempted to punch whoever was behind him again, what with it being an unfamiliar voice this time, but he'd rather not break anymore noses without reason. He did strike a slightly defensive pose however as he turned to face whoever had appeared behind him. A girl from the looks of it. She had short blonde hair and the bluest eyes Justin had ever seen, though there was something rather odd about her attire. She was wearing a te and all that, but... her shoulders looked almost like exposed machinery. Maybe she was into cosplaying or

something. Whatever it was, Justin didn't care. She was an unfamiliar in an already horrible situation. Yet despite that, Justin couldn't help but lower his defenses with relief. Maybe it was the smile on her face that seemed to melt his cold exterior; perhaps it was her piercing blue eyes. Justin wasn't one to look at other women, but he'd admit that whoever this girl was, she was kind of cute. But then, blonde chicks always were up his alley. He had tried convincing Chie to dye her hair blonde once, just to see what it looked like. It didn't end well. "I didn't mean to startle you." She apologized, a soft, gentle grin reaching across the corners of her face, cheek to cheek.

"Uh... I'm sorry, who are you again?" Justin questioned as politely as one could when asking for someone's name... someone who clearly seemed to recognize him, though he could not recognize her. Her appearance here was somewhat of a concern though, as she wasn't listed as one of the contestants on Teddie's little introduction. That meant she hadn't been accounted for, which meant either she had gotten in here on her own, or someone had forced her in. If it was the former, she was an unaccounted for persona user, and if Adachi was any example, that could be a very bad thing. I don't think I need to explain why the latter was just as bad, if not worse. The girl didn't seem offended at the very least; they had never been introduced, so it was understandable.

"It's nice to meet you. My name is Aigis. You are the one from the introduction video listed as... Captain Chivalry, Justin Tylor. Correct?" Justin's defensive pose had slowly faded away, arms reaching down to his hips as he slowly sunk back into a casual pose. She seemed well aware of the tournament going on here, which made the possibility of her being forced in here a lot less likely, though he didn't find much relief in that. Perhaps because she had insisted on calling him Captain Chivalry. Again, it was entirely sarcastic the way he was introduced in the video. If he was being legitimately called Captain Chivalry, he'd have no problems with the title, but it was clearly intended to be ironic. He sighed and rubbed at his temples slightly.

"What's wrong with respecting women?" Justin muttered to himself under his breath. Yeah, maybe he went a little out of his way to be more friendly or polite to the opposite gender, but was that such a bad trait to have as a person? Perhaps slightly sexist, but in the best way possible, right? Aigis didn't seem all that fazed by Justin's objections though. It was pretty much just a title to her; she didn't see any offense in referring to him as he was titled. "Aigis, was it? What exactly are you doing here? No one forced you in here, did they?" Justin questioned with concern for the girl. He'd hate to see innocents getting dragged into this as well; especially after everything else that had happened. She seemed somewhat angered by the question, a look of fiery determination in her crystal blue eyes as the question assaulted her ears, or... whatever those things were along her headband.

"No, I am here of my own volition. Our primary objective is the destruction of Shadows... but we have come to this world on a different mission." Justin's eyes

widened slightly. Now, he didn't know what she meant by 'our,' but he could understand destruction of shadows fairly clearly. So she must have had a persona then, did she not? And if she was here to fight shadows, she must be a good guy, right? Maybe she could help then. Maya was a fighter, hopefully she was still hanging in there; now that he had this girl's attention, perhaps she could save his sister.

"Wait, destruction? Jesus Christ, I am so happy you came along when you did, I need your hel-" Justin couldn't even finish his statement, as he was quickly interrupted by the crackle of the intercom. It seemed like Teddie was strategically letting the electricity spark from the speakers whenever Justin was getting somewhere in a conversation; just to piss him off, or perhaps to throw Justin off his tail.

"Ahaaaa! So that's where you go to, Justin. I've been looking all over for you! I thought you were supposed to be at the music room. You didn't run away, did you?" Teddie laughed at Justin's pain and misery from the other side of the intercom, mocking him and his cowardness. He totally deserved it, but all in all it would have never happened if Teddie hadn't gone fucking around with this world. He had pissed off the last person any of them wanted to piss off. Justin took a couple deep breaths, bottom lip quivering a bit. He didn't have time for this. His sister's life was in danger right now and it was his fault. If this was some prank, it had gone on for far too long. "Ooooh... who's the honey? Were you in the middle of trying to score with her? Tsk, tsk, I'm sure Chie-chan won't be happy to hear about this."

"Fuck you Teddie. You know why she's here and so would Chie." Justin pointed out with aggravation. Teddie probably wasn't going to say anything to his girlfriend, but even if he did, I'm sure she'd realize by now that Teddie was spouting bullshit and lies by this point, furthermore, two people couldn't make it to the same room without having to fight. Teddie laughed with enthusiasm and amusement.

"Oh my, did you figure it out? I didn't have a choice after those guys decided on their own to horn in on the fun. You're a bright boy, Justin... You know what's coming next, don't you?"

"My foot up your ass." Justin countered. The speaker simply crackled again as Teddie turned his microphone off. He was pretty clear; the two would fight and Justin didn't have a say in the matter. And it was true, as far as he knew Aigis didn't know sign-language, why should she? And that meant once he started messing with their speech, there was going to be a problem... Justin turned to Aigis, the muscles in his chest clenched tight. Great, now he was going to have to beat the shit out of some girl he didn't even know. God he hated Teddie right now. The girl just continued to smile though, oblivious to everything that was going on.

"Only the victor of each match may move on, yes?" Justin flinched a bit with surprise. She was entirely aware she was about to get in a fight. Usually these fights

were proceeded with being insulted by the other, but her words weren't being deformed at all. She could understand what was going on around her, and Justin likewise could understand her. Seemed Teddie forgot to morph their speech or something. Maybe he just felt it wasn't needed right now, especially now that everyone across the school was starting to catch on.

"...You know about the fight?" Justin questioned. She nodded with confirmation, her movement a little stilted though entirely understandable all the same. After all, Teddie could only manipulate words, not movements, so it worked out for the better that way. "Look, I really hate to do this, but I need your help. My sister is in a lot of trouble, and if you have as much experience fighting shadows as you claim, then I can use a hand." Aigis smiled a bit. She wasn't aware of Justin's circumstances, but she got what he was trying to say. He didn't want to fight, but he had to because time was of the essence. And regardless of the conclusion of the match, so long as she got the aid she needed, it wouldn't matter. So he was proposing an alliance. Aigis didn't see a problem with that, save perhaps how they were going to both leave once the match was over.

"Of course. Let us engage." She bowed with respect before donning a more aggressive fighting position. Justin took a deep breath as he struck a fighting posture of his own. He didn't feel good about this, but if she understood why they had to do this, maybe he wouldn't feel as bad afterwards for punching some girl in the face. No one made a movement for a while, and while Justin would have preferred to have not had the first blow, he realized he couldn't just stand around in fear of hurting his pride. He took a deep breath before running forth, letting out a battle cry as he thrust his fist forward in a straight ouch to her torso...

Bad idea. His hand practically cracked in two as his fist collided with her metal chasis. If there was any doubt that that weird outfit of hers wasn't just a costume, that was long gone after he tried punching her. She was built like a rock, and within seconds Justin was jumping around waving his fist as he tried to numb the pain. "Ow, ow, ow ow ow ow!" He chanted over and over again, trying to massage his sore hand with the fingers from the other. Aigis didn't even seem all that surprised; like she had expected him to break his fist from trying to fight her. You know, a warning would have been nice. How exactly was he supposed to fight what he couldn't hit... Even worse...

How was he supposed to win a fight where the opponent had an entire arsenal of guns sprouting from their back? Her hands gave way to a machine gun like structure, her shoulders to rocket launchers and assault rifles. She looked like a walking weapon, and there was a good chance she was. Justin's jaw hit the ground almost immediately. What was she trying to do, kill him!? They were supposed to be working together dammit!

“Hey, hey, hey! What do you think you’re doing!?” Justin shouted with fear as her weapons started to rev up, ready to barrage Justin with a fury of bullets. And had he not started running, he would have been caught up in it almost immediately. The bullets seemed to get closer and closer the longer he ran, each shot hitting where he had stood only a split second earlier. If she was trying to kill him, she was coming pretty damn close. Holy hell; and to think he was going to go easy on her. All he knew was he couldn’t keep running from this; his legs weren’t that good. He needed cover. His eyes darted around for a moment before he noticed a stack of chairs off to the corner. He took a deep breath as he ran that-a-way, trail of ammunition following him the whole way there. Timing was in his favor, as just as he passed by the desks stacked on top of each other, she launched a rocket at Justin, sending him flying forward and knocking the desks over. He hit the ground hard, though thankfully for him, it seemed Aigis needed to reload her weapons. By the time he was back on his feet, he still had a short head-start. Before the weapons could rev up again, he had dived behind one of the desks she had knocked down earlier.

Bullet after bullet ricoched from the desk’s surface. It wasn’t exactly bulletproof, but it did stop Justin from getting shot for a little bit, and it did give him some breathing room and time to think. Not much, but it helped. He had to think, what could he possibly use to break a killing machine like that? He couldn’t use his fists, and he had long stopped carrying his revolver around, so he couldn’t exactly fire back. He needed some improve weaponry. But the only thing around here were a couple of basketballs and some desks. I don’t think a basketball was going to do much damage, but... Justin had an idea. He turned about so his back was no longer facing the bullet filled desk, but rather so he was facing it head on, foot positioned against it’s underside. With all the holes in it now, it had become significantly lighter. And that made it rather easy to make airborne.

Justin gave it a quick kick, sending the desk flying at Aigis. It did nothing more than distract her for a moment, her bullets still trained on the desk as she suspected Justin to be hiding behind it. In fact, it was nothing more than a distraction. Before she could realize it, Justin had grabbed a hold of a chair from the stack and used all his strength to send it flying at her. The chair smacked her in the head, knocking her down in an instant. Steel could only take so much pressure before folding after all, and in Aigis’s case, the wiring in her neck had crackled abit under the pressure of a folding chair hitting her dead in the face. She laid on the ground, trying to twist her head back in position. If tearing someone’s head off didn’t count as a victory, Justin wasn’t sure what was. In truth, the match was far from over.

He approached Aigis, hand extended to help her back to her feet; though she had other plans. She quickly raised her foot towards Justin’s stomach as he approached and activated what one would assume would be jet boots, sending Justin flying so far he had managed to actually hit the ceiling of the room before tumbling down. Needless to say, he wasn’t getting up anytime soon. Aigis wiped some dust from the

guns along her wrist, pride in her victory as she readjusted herself. "What a shocking victory! Did that weaponry meet regulation standards?" Teddie joked a bit from the intercom hanging above Justin. He was in too much pain from his spine hitting the hardest thing it could have possibly hit to care though. "The Heartless Armed Angel wins the round with a sneak attack. Friend against Friend, beating the heck out of each other!"

Aigis ignored the voice transmitting across the intercom. She was a little more concerned about the young man twitching violently on the floor as he tried to hold back screams of pain. After all, she had made a promise. She always kept her promises. She smiled as she extended her hand to the young man, who heaved heavily with pain. A fight was a fight, but goddamn, thrusting him into the ceiling? Not cool. "You're very resourceful." She complimented, that smile of hers still across her face. It was oddly comforting, yet really annoying at the same time. She could have killed Justin and she was just kind of playing it off like nothing had happened.

"I work well under pressure." Justin groaned as she helped him up to his feet. Aigis was actually rather impressed. She wasn't expecting that fight to last very long. Most fights she had with humans didn't last very long; her reflexes were just too good; and yet, she hadn't even seen what should have been obvious to her. If she hadn't been made as durable as she was, that could have ended the fight fatally. Works well under pressure indeed. She was rather impressed to say the least. It was only a shame she couldn't detect a Persona in him. He would have been quite the catch. Justin looked around, grabbing at his ribs in pain as he analyzed his circumstances. Well he lost now, so he was stuck here, right? How was he supposed to save his sister when he couldn't even leave? He wished he had thought this all through better. He needed Aigis, and after that little display, he was confident she could defeat his shadow. "So... you're a, uh... robot?"

"Yes. I am not human." She clarified. It probably should have been obvious to Justin immediately, but whatever. He was more than fascinated by the girl. A living, breathing, robot. One who could walk and talk and could have conversations. One who could show compassion and emotion. She would be a damn convincing human without the whole walking weapon thing going for her. The tech geek in Justin was squealing like a little girl right now. This was beyond the realms of his imagination. I mean, he always believed that scientists would reach this point eventually, but so soon? This was extraordinary! Especially one so human like.

Someone was going to have to remind Justin to rub this in Kurt's face at some point. Aigis smiled as she scanned the room for an exit. She was well aware Justin wasn't getting out through the door. She paced around, Justin following slowly behind her hoping that maybe she was making her way through a maze or something to the exit. In actuality, she had been deep in thought on a theory. And as with any theory, it could only be proven through testing. She quickly pulled that rocket launcher out

of her shoulder again, to which Justin immediately ducked. She fired the explosive off into a wall separating the hallway and the gymnasium, leaving a big hole there. "I suspect that the host of this tournament could not create a barrier where there already was one." She smiled as she stepped through the hole, extending her arms to encourage Justin to follow in her stead. Much to his amazement, there was nothing there. There was no way he could make a hole like that, but dear god that would have been useful to know earlier.

"Aigis, you are a goddamn genius."